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SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR NEA/ARPI; NEA/PPD; LONDON FOR TSOU; PARIS FOR ZEYA

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [KPAO](#) [KISL](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [KU](#) [TERRORISM](#)

SUBJECT: Engaging Kuwaitis On Terrorism and Islam

Ref: A) State 131453

B) State 121757

1. (U) SUMMARY: The July 7 terror attacks in London, followed closely by increasingly horrific and deadly suicide attacks in Iraq, Lebanon and Egypt, have deeply affected Kuwaiti leaders and opinion makers. Some contacts have said that the London attacks, in particular, hit them harder than the 9/11 attacks, because so many Kuwaitis travel often to London. Post continually engages contacts from the Government and media in discussions about terrorism and regional security, reiterating the need for the unequivocal condemnation of violence to come from Kuwaitis themselves. The tragic spate of recent, spectacular attacks has offered post yet another opportunity to engage interlocutors on terrorism, Islam, and security in Iraq, as encouraged in reftels A and B, and contacts have responded. END SUMMARY.

2. (U) IO actively sought meetings with editors, columnists and opinion-makers in the wake of the attacks. Engagement included both encouraging contacts to condemn the terrorist acts in the strongest religious terms, and seeking longer-term solutions in addressing terrorism and the threat of extremism. Sami Al-Nesf, the media advisor to the Prime Minister and a columnist with pro-government Al-Anba newspaper, wrote a column July 9 calling for a fatwa (religious decree) condemning Osama bin Laden and his actions. Al-Nesf and PDOff have had ongoing conversations since then to discuss how best to condemn continued violence in Iraq.

3. (SBU) IO met with Adnan Qakoon, the editor in charge of local news for pro-government Arabic daily Al-Qabas, to discuss his paper's coverage of terrorism. While the paper already takes a firm line against terrorism, Qakoon said that he was working on a series of reports highlighting the reactions to the terrorist attacks of prominent Kuwaiti Islamist politicians such as Salafi Members of Parliament Walid Al-Tabtabaei and Fahd Al-Khanna. After U.S. military action in Fallujah in November 2004, Qakoon said, these MPs led Islamists in condemning the U.S. actions as "genocide" and "massacre." By contrast, Al-Tabtabaei responded to the London bombings by writing a column encouraging the terrorists to spare London but attack Israel instead, and gave a lengthy interview blaming terrorism on American policy in the region, in particular Abu Ghraib and Guantanamo. Qakoon said that by spotlighting such contradictory reactions, he hoped to discredit these lawmakers in the eyes of all but their most ardent supporters.

4. (SBU) In meetings with Ali Ruz and Ali Ballout, the managing editor and deputy managing editor, respectively, of Al-Rai Al-A'am, Kuwait's largest Arabic daily, the men explained their determination to condemn the London bombings and other attacks in the strongest terms. Ruz, who rarely writes columns under his own byline, preferring to edit the work of others at the paper, wrote a stark column condemning the London attacks on July 10. In a series of rhetorical questions, Ruz questioned the motivations of the bombers and the so-far inadequate response of the societies that have spawned such acts. Both men said that they would continue to seek opportunities to address this issue in the paper.

5. (U) Other PD contacts have responded independently, without encouragement from post. Khalil Ali Haider, a moderate Shi'a writer, wrote a column in independent Arabic daily Al-Watan on July 19 encouraging Arabs to stand up and examine their faith. He wrote: "Why do terror attacks continue? We point fingers. We don't look in. We don't blame ourselves. There are those among us who tolerate takfir ideology and as long as they do, the terror will go on." (Note: "takfir" refers to the practice of accusing others, including some Muslims, of apostasy, a crime punishable by death in some extreme interpretations of Islam. End note.)

6. (U) PD contact Dr. Ayed Al-Manna, an advisor to the

Kuwait Journalist's Association and frequent critic of U.S. policy towards the Palestinians, slammed those who attempted to justify the recent bombings on religious grounds in his July 19 column in Al-Watan. He wrote: "Some people interpret the original religious texts to serve their interests and call leaders of the nations 'Infidels.' These are the same people who legitimize suicide operations although their claims are neither supported by religion nor the nation's prominent scholars . Can anyone justify the terrorist operations and the murder of innocent Iraqi children in one area and another brutal operation in Al-Mussaiab which killed more than 98 Iraqis and injured scores? Can these operations be considered jihad, or crime motivated by malice?"

17. (U) Among Islamists, Dr. Wael Al-Hassawi, the former editor of Salafi magazine Al-Furqan, and a frequent interlocutor for both PD and POL on Islamist issues, denounced the terrorist attacks in religious terms. In his July 10 column in Al-Rai Al-Aam, he wrote: "Historically, it is the Muslims who have built bridges of civilization to improve the image of Islam in the West and to promote this sublime religion in that part of the world, leading millions of Westerners to freely embrace Islam. However, suddenly and without any premises, the terrorists are striving to destroy what the Muslims have achieved over the past centuries . Unfortunately, all this has happened in the name of Islam - the religion of love and peace."

18. (U) Post is also undertaking more formal outreach efforts to address the advice contained in Reftel B. The Charge is hosting an afternoon gathering at his home July 26 for a wide spectrum of Kuwaiti Islamists drawn from the realms of politics, academia, the media and the private sector. The purpose of the meeting is to engage these leaders about what role religion plays in society and how best to engage Muslim leaders to promote moderation and condemn violence. Post plans to arrange a similar gathering in the same venue, again under the CDA's auspices, for columnists and other media figures.

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